



Office of Childhood
Office of Special Education
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Annual Report on Infants Referred to First Steps Identified through the Missouri Newborn Hearing Screening Program

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Purpose

Under the Newborn Hearing Screening law, RSMo 191.931, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall “monitor the delivery of early intervention services to those infants identified by the newborn hearing screening program and report annually to the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS).” Eligible infants are served by the Missouri First Steps Program under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This report provides information related to the number of infants born in 2024 identified with permanent hearing loss through the Missouri Newborn Hearing Screening Program and referred to First Steps.

Infants Enrolled in the First Steps Program

As of October 20, 2025, 124 infants born in 2024 were identified with hearing loss by DHSS. It is important to note that the 124 infants included infants who received incomplete results or unknown types of hearing loss based on what was reported to DHSS. Infants who were determined to be suffering from middle ear pathology (e.g., fluid in the middle ear from colds, ear infections) and who do not have a permanent hearing loss could be removed from the list later based on updates received from audiologists.

Of the 124 infants identified by DHSS, 101 (81.5%) were referred to the First Steps program. Of the 101 infants referred to First Steps, 73 (72.3%) were found eligible and had an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The remaining 28 infants did not reach IFSP status due to the following reasons: 13 infants were withdrawn, 14 infants were unable to be located, and one infant was ineligible for the First Steps program.

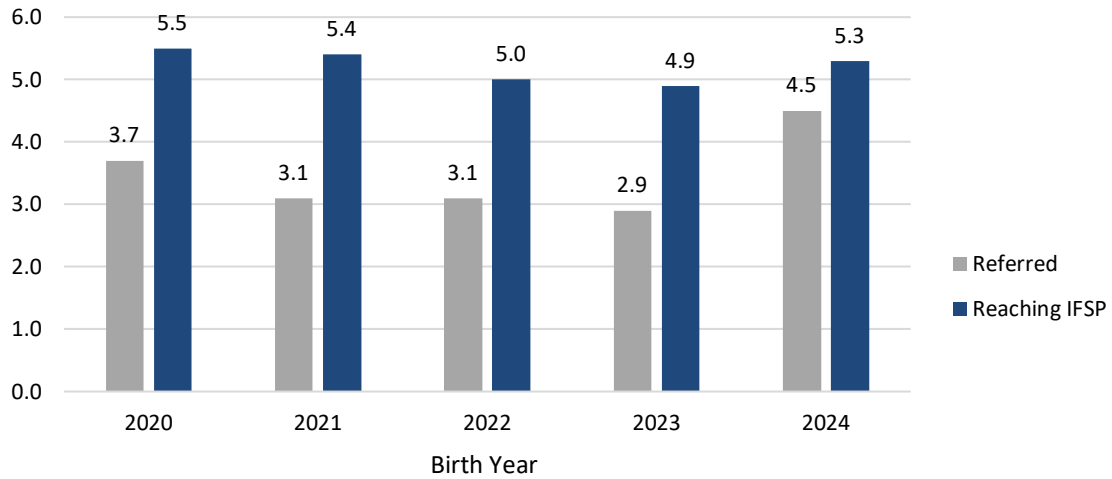
Of the 73 infants who had an IFSP, 68 (93.2%) were in active status as of October 20, 2025. The remaining infants are inactive due to the following reasons: four infants were unable to be located, and one infant was withdrawn.

Average Age at Referral

Figure 1 represents the average age in months at the time of referral to First Steps for the 101

infants referred. The average age at referral for infants born in 2024 was 4.5 months. The average age at the time of initial IFSP for the 73 infants who reached IFSP was 5.3 months.

Figure 1. Average Age in Months at Referral and Reaching IFSP

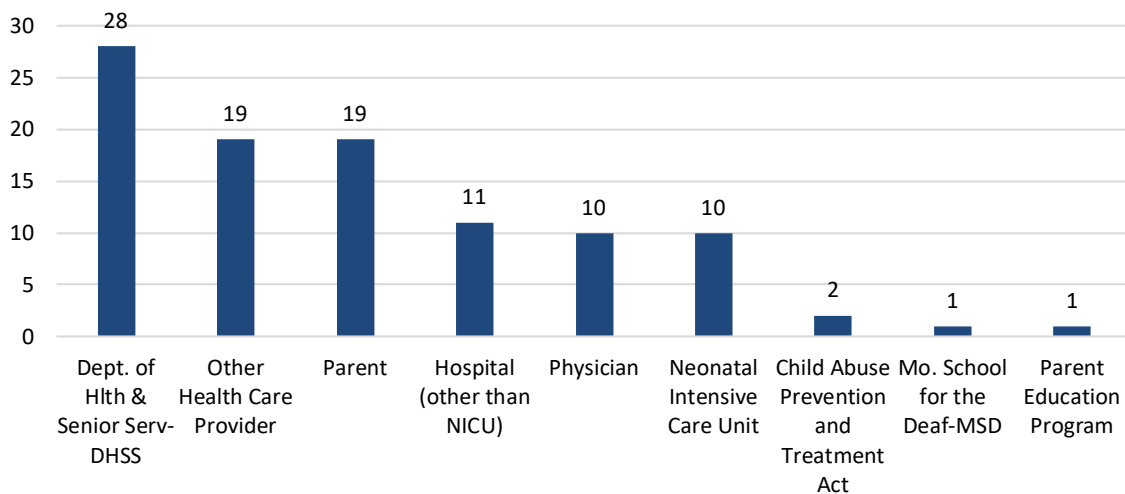


Referral Sources

Figure 2 represents the sources of initial referrals* to First Steps for infants with hearing loss identified by DHSS. Of the 101 infants referred to First Steps, most initial referrals were made by DHSS with 28 (27.7%), Other Health Care Provider with 19 (18.8%), and Parent with 19 (18.8%).

*If a child has multiple referrals, the most recent referral was reported.

Figure 2. First Steps Referral Sources



Eligibility Categories

Table 1 provides the primary First Steps eligibility category for the 73 infants who were determined eligible for services and reached IFSP. Sixty-three infants (86.3%) were found eligible due to a diagnosed condition.

Table 1. Reasons for Eligibility

Reason for Eligibility	Number of Infants	Percent of Eligibility
Diagnosed Condition	63	86.3%
Developmental Delay - Half age delay	8	11.0%
Newborn Condition	1	1.4%
Other Condition	1	1.4%
Total	73	100.0%

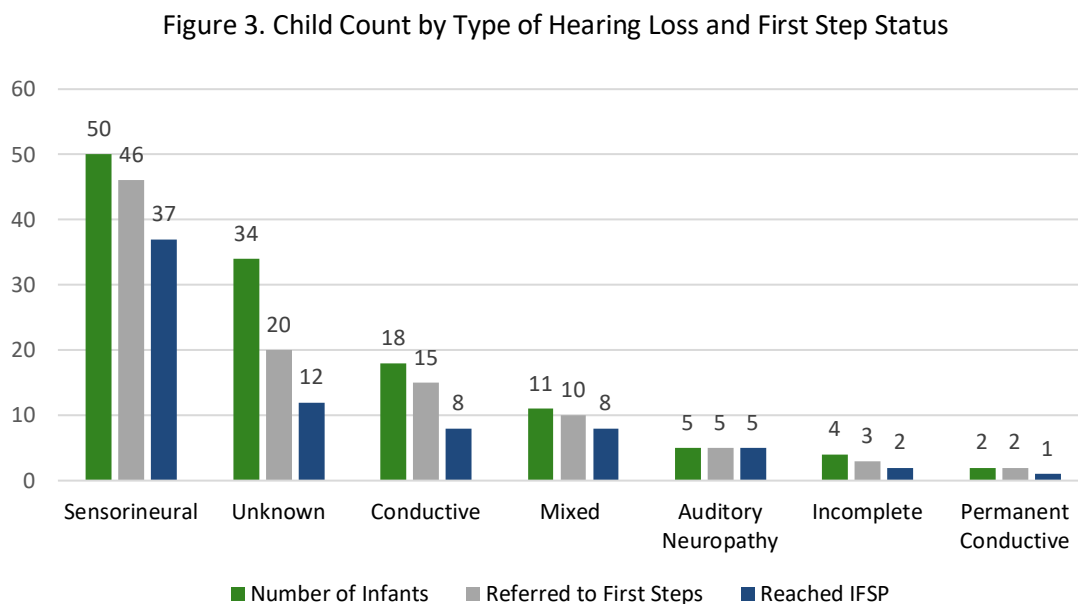
Type of Hearing Loss

Table 2 represents the type of hearing loss and related First Steps referral and eligibility percentages for the 124 infants identified by DHSS. Of the 124 infants, 50 (40.3%) had sensorineural hearing loss. Of the 50 infants with sensorineural hearing loss, 46 (92.0%) were referred to First Steps and, of those referred, 37 (80.4%) reached IFSP.

Table 2. Type of Hearing Loss and First Steps Status

Type of Loss	Number of Infants	Referred to First Steps	Reached IFSP	Percent Reached IFSP
Sensorineural	50	46	37	80.4%
Unknown	34	20	12	60.0%
Conductive	18	15	8	53.3%
Mixed	11	10	8	80.0%
Auditory Neuropathy	5	5	5	100.0%
Incomplete	4	3	2	66.7%
Permanent Conductive	2	2	1	50.0%
Total	124	101	73	72.3%

Figure 3 visually represents child count by type of hearing loss and First Steps status based on the information from table 2.



Service Authorizations

Table 3 represents First Steps service authorizations for the 73 infants identified by DHSS who were in active IFSP status as of October 20, 2025. There were 289 active authorizations for the 73 infants with hearing loss. Over 65 percent of these authorizations were for special instructions and audiology. The top three categories of First Steps service authorizations were:

- 1) 108 (37.4%) authorizations for Special Instruction,
- 2) 80 (27.7%) authorizations for Audiology, and
- 3) 37 (12.8%) authorizations for Speech Language Pathology.

Please find table 3 on page 5.

Table 3. First Steps Authorizations

	AT Service	Consultation/Facilitation with Others	Direct Child Service	Evaluation/Assessment	Family Education/Training/Support	OAE limited: Evoked otoacoustic	Tympanometry (impedance testing	Visual Reinforcement Audiometer	Grand Total	Percentage
Special Instruction	0	20	49	35	4	0	0	0	108	37.4%
Audiology	26	1	5	21	5	20	1	1	80	27.7%
Speech Language Pathology	1	3	32	0	1	0	0	0	37	12.8%
Physical Therapy	0	8	28	0	0	0	0	0	36	12.5%
Occupational Therapy	0	6	22	0	0	0	0	0	28	9.7%
Grand Total	27	38	136	56	10	20	1	1	289	100.0%

* AT – Assistive Technology

* OAE – Otoacoustic Emissions